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STUDY FOR LAUNCHING A LIFE-BOAT
By Winslow Homer

SOME CRAYON STUDIES BY WINSLOW HOMER

A peculiar interest attaches to an artist's studies or preliminary drawings. They are the documents out of which finished works are fashioned, and they have for the most part as much individuality as the completed pictures. Not infrequently they have a life and a spirit which one fails to see in the elaborate compositions in which they ultimately appear. Some of these studies are mere notes, a pictorial shorthand record of scenes witnessed or impressions caught; others are the witness of careful preparation and prolonged study. But whatever be their origin or significance, they are in a very real sense paintings in the rough, since they register for future use the observations, the thoughts, the dreams, of the artist.

Winslow Homer is one of the great men in American art; many competent judges would class him with the three or four masters of painting this country has produced. The six crayon studies, therefore, which I am privileged to use in *BRUSH AND PENCIL*—selected from a series of thirty or more made some years ago on the coast of Cornwall and never before published—will be prized by the readers as a witness of the man and his methods. Those familiar with the finished work of Homer will recognize in these studies the directness, the rugged simplicity, the unique selection of subjects, the wonderful

power, that have made his paintings notable in exhibitions from the outset of his career. An appreciative article on his art was published a number of months ago in *BRUSH AND PENCIL*, and from this I may be permitted to quote a few words of characterization which apply as directly to the drawings herewith reproduced as to the canvases then considered.

"Homer is great," the writer says, "because he has been loyal to himself—to his perceptions and convictions; because he has been

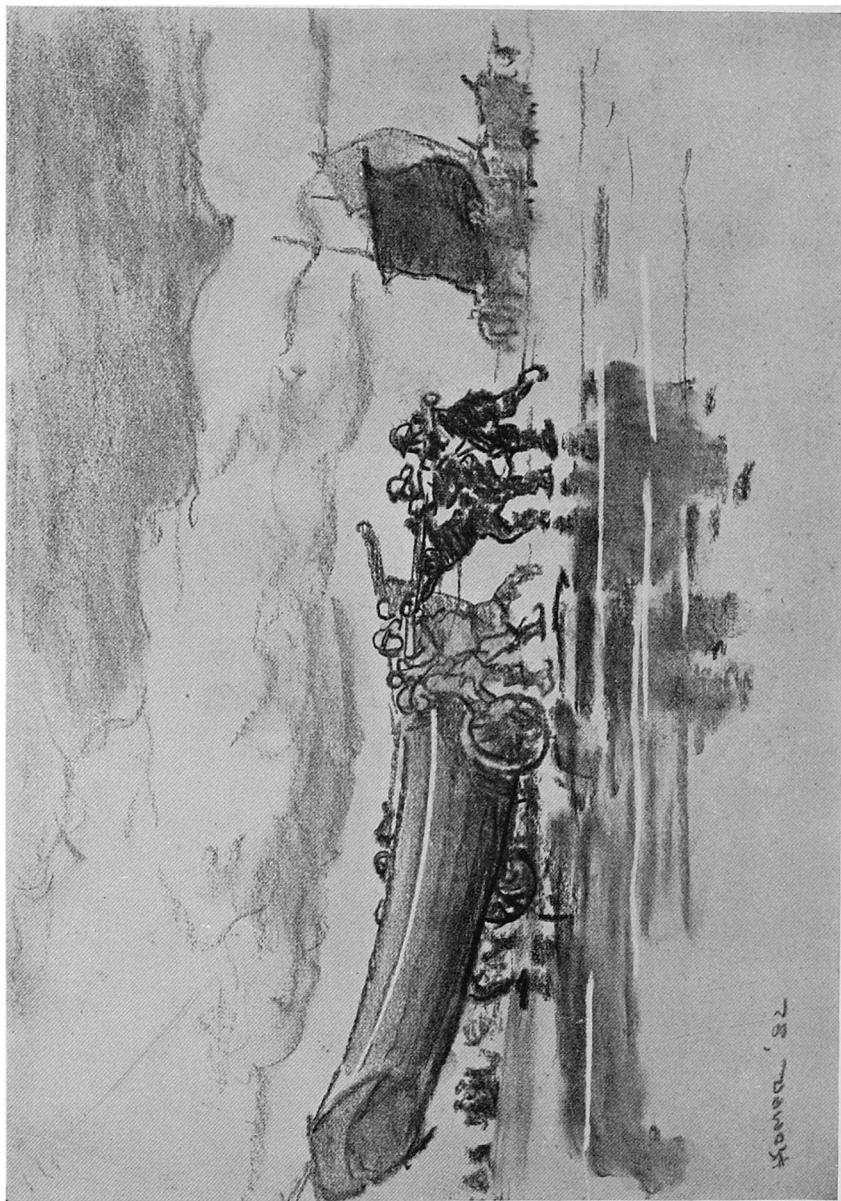


FIGURE STUDY

By Winslow Homer

loyal to the country that nurtured him; because he has been brave enough to renounce academic art; foreign influences, false idols, and with a deaf ear to the dictates of tastes and fashions, to go direct to nature for his inspiration and to interpret nature according to his light. Like the poet Whitman, between whom and himself there is a certain bond of sympathy and unity, Homer 'accepts reality and dares not question it'; and again like Whitman, his art stands isolated, unique, alone.

"There is something rugged, austere, even Titanic, in almost everything Homer has done. The sensuous charm of mere placid beauty has never appealed to him as a motive. He is pre-eminently a painter of the sea, yet the unruffled water-mirrors, reflecting clouds and tinted sails, which gladdened the heart of a Clays, never impelled him to



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transcribe their prettiness. His sea is the watery waste as the expression of tremendous force, mystery, peril. He is the painter of landscapes, but his landscapes are redolent of the primeval forests of the New World, its bleak hills, its crags; they are not delightful, picturesque nooks and corners that suggest picnic parties and trysting-places. He is a painter of men and women, but his characters are not drawing-room loiterers or social favorites. They are pioneers, fishermen, seafaring folk, representatives of the humbler walks of life in a genuine democracy—in a word, common people of interest.



STUDY OF CHILDREN
By Winslow Homer

"There is not in a single picture Homer ever painted the slightest trace of mere decorative beauty, either in composition or coloring. On the contrary his canvases are often frankly ugly, austere, even to the disagreeable. His technique is strictly his own, and in no sense savors of the schools. Often his drawing is faulty and his flesh tints are not true, yet when we have said this we must also say that everything he has painted is *vital* art. His art has been called the language of prose, but it is the prose that is more forceful than that which is tricked out with rhyme or measured into feet. It is not the record of a man who sees pleasantly and expresses what he sees artistically; it is the record of strong, artistic feeling."

I have quoted these words at length, partly because they give in a nutshell the essential character of Homer's art, and partly because they adequately describe the whole series of studies from which the

six here presented are selected. Homer for many years has been a recluse on the rock-bound coast of Scarborough, Maine, where he has withdrawn himself from the amenities and conventionalities of social life, consorted with the simple folk of the district, and communed with the mysteries and powers of nature. When he visited England he found the coast of Cornwall a congenial spot, and its inhabitants people after his own heart. The ocean has supplied Homer with the motives for his best work, and it is a mere matter of speculation how far his sojourn on the Cornwall coast fixed in him his love of the sea and determined him in the selection of those themes with which



STUDY OF FISHERFOLK
By Winslow Homer

his name is intimately connected, and which, among American painters, he in a certain sense has pre-empted.

Certainly the studies referred to were all preliminary work. None of them have been elaborated on canvas and none of them likely ever will be. Yet there are notes in every one that we may find recurring time and again in his famous canvases. When these drawings were made it is to be doubted if their subsequent use entered into consideration. There is no royal road to fame in art any more than in other enterprises—it is a matter of study, practice, work; and no one has had a fuller realization of this than Homer.

It is by studies such as these that Homer acquired his superb mastery in the depiction of the sea with its mystery and terror, and in the portrayal of the simple, heroic people who tempt its dangers. They are offered here, not as examples of his art, but of the material that enters into his art.

WALTER W. COLE.

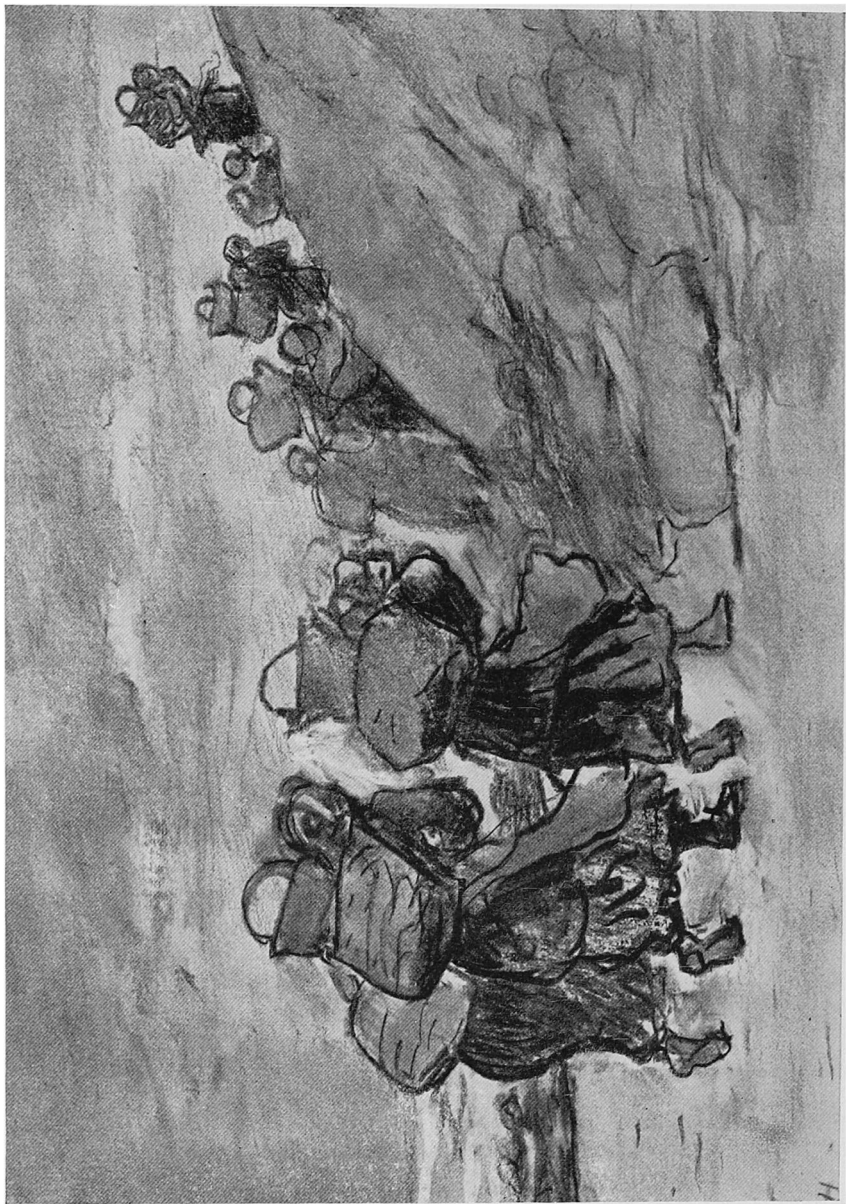


FIGURE STUDY
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